

The Atlantic World in the Antipodes

The Atlantic World in the Antipodes:
Effects and Transformations
since the Eighteenth Century

Edited by

Kate Fullagar

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To the memory of
Bernard Smith
(1916-2011)

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The Atlantic World in the Antipodes is dedicated to the memory of the scholar Bernard Smith, who died at the age of 94 during its production. An important influence on many of the contributors as well as many of the authorities cited herein, Smith represents both the Sydney base of this collection and its explicit desire to move beyond bases in history through a commitment to comparative analysis; he is for this book both the local and the conviction that all localities are formed more by exchange than by dominance.

Kate Fullagar, Sydney, 2011

INTRODUCTION

THE ATLANTIC WORLD IN THE ANTIPODES

KATE FULLAGAR

This book has struggled less with what is in its name and more with what to call it in the first place. It emerged from an extended collective discussion about human exchanges between the “Atlantic World” and the “Pacific World” in the modern age, playing with a fresh connection within what has been called “the new thalassology.”¹ But this pairing soon ran up against problems, for if the Atlantic World has been difficult to define in the last few decades, the content of the Pacific World has caused angst for generations.² While most can agree that the Atlantic World as a field of analysis includes roughly the relevant exchanges from the four continents that border the Atlantic Ocean, few have ever believed that the Pacific World includes interactions from all the lands that touch the Pacific Ocean. The “Pacific” in modern humanities scholarship usually refers to the Sea of Islands within the Pacific Ocean’s basin; in the social sciences, it can also include some or all of the Asian, American, and Australasian continental borders of the Pacific Ocean, as well as some or all of the Malay Archipelago; biogeographers pointedly exclude Australasia and the Malay Archipelago, but not New Zealand; the United Nations excises all continental edges, but not Australasia (which in this instance embraces New Zealand). The term “Oceania” is attractive, though it has now also been tugged in most of the same directions as has “Pacific”, like a blanket that overheats some while leaving others in the cold, never satisfying all.

It soon became apparent that the majority of our contributors were playing rather with some kind of north/south divide, though in varying ways. One third of the contributors discuss exchanges between northern Euro-America and a version of the Sea of Islands that has been associated traditionally with the South Pacific (though it usually somehow includes the “north-lying” Hawaiian islands). Another third of the authors in this volume clearly refer to a distinction between northern Euro-America and a southern Pacific which includes both the Hawaiian group *and* Australasia.

Two centre only on exchanges between the northern hemisphere and the island continent of Australia; still two others take the north/south divide further and contrast northern Euro-America with southern regions in both the Pacific *and* Indian oceans. Yet, as Margaret Jolly has recently commented elsewhere, a reliance on the language of northern Euro-American cartography is likely to throw up just as many headaches as the debate about oceanic worlds. Jolly fears that the language of cartography “tends to naturalise and dehistoricise [not to mention simplify] difference,” and to “associate the points of the compass with the body habitus of up and down, left and right.” As well, of course, it is entangled problematically with a “deep imperial history.”³

We claimed eventually a word that gestures to the cardinal divide but in its quaintness reminds us up-front of its artificiality and its certain historicity. The Antipodes hardly refuses the idea of up and down—if anything it affirms notions of right-side and wrong-side—and it is associated with at least the beginnings and some later parts of the imperial age, but it is also clearly a mythic term: the Antipodes conveys immediately its own fantastical, changeable, and unstable basis. The term is chosen in the deliberate hope that it will prompt a pause for thought about what it might possibly contain and what it could possibly imply. Against this attempt to stake out a freshly disruptive term, we have maintained the still current reference to the Atlantic World, though few chapters, it is admitted, refer to the African angle explicitly.⁴ It has been kept partly as a way to suggest the global nature of the transactions discussed herein and partly as a way to retain an emphasis on oceanic media. Mostly, however, it is kept because as a scholarly field in the last couple of decades, and especially recently, it has produced so many self-reflective critiques that it is already largely accepted to be as fluid and as provisional as any mythic idea.

Significant problems yet persist with our title—not least in that some of the Atlantic World is indeed *in* the Antipodes, nor in that the Antipodes technically means any opposite footers, rather than just those estimated by classical thinkers—but we hope they will now only add to the agenda pursued in this volume. That agenda is to think afresh about some of the effects and transformations wrought by exchanges between those enmeshed in an older imperial triangle and those living approximately half a world away. This collection focuses specifically on effects and transformations since the eighteenth century, when exchanges really moved from “thin ribbons of report,” in Damon Salesa’s words, to more “sustained engagements.” The Antipodes in this context is then, like the Atlantic World, as much a time as a place.⁵

As Salesa also notes in his thoughtful Afterword, although the Atlantic World and the Antipodes have deep historiographies in themselves, they have a rather shallow shared body of scholarship. The two fields have very different strengths. This volume makes a start on an effort to see how each could introduce at least one new strength or idea to the other—namely, as Salesa has identified, to introduce more cogently to Atlantic history an emphasis on indigenous people and the various ways this might also alter fundamental methodology in the field, and to introduce to Antipodean history, or rather remind it of, the importance of the oceanic realm in which the region has its being and all of its past. The chapters by Jolly, Schaffer, Gardner, Herle, McDonnell, Curthoys, and Teaiwa perhaps do most for the former move; those by Maxwell-Stewart, McCalman, Jensen, Bashford, and Fitzpatrick work more for the latter.

The volume is divided into four sections: Voyaging, Investigating, Befriending, and Resisting. Voyaging and Resisting are perhaps not so surprising given our interest in strengthening oceanic and indigenous themes. Neither should Investigating be too unexpected, remembering the intense history of scientific research associated with both the era and the motivation behind many exchanges in the Atlantic and Antipodean regions. The notion of Befriending was, however, less anticipated; we began with a neutral word like Encountering but the chapters in Part III by Gardner, Fitzpatrick, and Herle all emphasised so eloquently the significance of personal affection between the missionaries, priests, travelers, guides, anthropologists, and assistants they discussed that it seemed churlish not to recognise the theme formally.⁶ Indeed, one of the overriding points of the volume turns out to be the significance of the individual recognition of shared humanity despite the violence, disease, oppression, war, and condescension that also swirl through our studies. The moments of remorse and pity on board the *Resolution* and the *Beagle*; the vital connections between MacGillivray and Neimnal, Codrington and Sarawia, Layard and Malteres; the breakthroughs achieved at a nineteenth-century state parliamentary inquiry or at a twenty-first-century UNESCO meeting—all work to help dismantle further the damnably resilient “fatal impact” view of cultural clash in oceanic worlds. It is worth noting, too, as an aside, the recent general rise of interest in friendship, at least in Antipodean scholarship.⁷

The first section on Voyaging spans the century from the 1770s to the 1870s—a great age of sail to be sure, for inhabitants of both the Atlantic World and the Antipodes, though here we focus most intently on certain voyages from the Atlantic to its Antipodes. Margaret Jolly uses Cook’s second expedition to the Pacific in 1772-74 to unravel some of the ways in

which racial difference was fabricated in the late eighteenth-century European mind, not just with threads of knowledge about region but also with those about gender. The accounts by the naturalists Johann Reinhold Forster and his son, George Forster, amplify this complicated process, even while their “discordance” with one another, as Jolly notes, reminds us of the impossibility of finding one “grand, theoretical schema” on the issue. Throughout, the idea of Pacific women’s agency is woven through the analysis, in some ways highlighting the strangeness of the Forsters’ theoretical determination but in other ways also showing how the Pacific still touched them sufficiently to have its own effect on their vision. Hamish Maxwell-Stewart’s chapter is entirely different, focusing on the near-eighty years of British convict transportation to the Australian colonies, though it also wrestles with a difficult dichotomy: where Jolly investigates the fields of gender and race, Maxwell-Stewart surveys the ideas of liberty and health—or lack of liberty and health, as the case turns out strangely to be. With particular focus on the duration and not just the destination, Maxwell-Stewart compares both trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific versions of coerced voyaging and finds surprisingly strong contrasts between them. Though some recent scholarship has emphasised the comparisons between the Atlantic slave’s middle passage and the Antipodean convict’s middle passage, this chapter shows how overtly superior were the convict’s opportunities—outliving not only the slave but oftentimes and ironically even the average labourer back home. For most convicts, the voyage from the Atlantic World to the Antipodes was transformative for their bodies in unexpected ways, though, as Maxwell-Stewart notes, the effect on their minds involves alternate forms of research. Iain McCalman’s chapter does investigate the effect of the Antipodean voyage on at least one lively mind: it discusses the significance of crossing the Pacific and Indian oceans in the maturation of the ideas of Charles Darwin. Where many historians have credited the Galapagos Islands off South America as the main source for Darwin’s theory of evolution, McCalman argues instead that it was the human societies, the unfamiliar fauna, and the coral reefs of the Antipodes which most helped Darwin to deconstruct creationist views, to reach for metaphors of struggle, and to understand life as one perpetual “descent through natural selection.” Few chapters underscore more boldly how far the Atlantic World was transformed by the Antipodes.

The second section on Investigating focuses entirely on scientists. Like McCalman, Simon Schaffer also invokes the notion of an Antipodean laboratory when speaking of what he calls “North Atlantic” scientific endeavours. Importantly, and again like McCalman on Darwin, Schaffer

notes that Oceania was hardly the kind of laboratory that served only to prove or disprove hypotheses forged back home; it was, rather, the kind that revealed fresh discoveries because of the unprecedented dynamics produced by encounter. Discussing British astronomical projects in the Antipodes more than one hundred years apart, Schaffer shows how each was deeply affected by the specifics of Pacific place—despite aspirations to perfect insulation. Likewise, if not more so, he shows how Pacific peoples managed to use these studies in measurement for their own philosophical and social ends. The following chapters by Jensen and Bashford focus less on Pacific peoples and more on the effects of Antipodean geographic difference. Sophie Jensen's chapter on the sometime-dissolute naturalist John MacGillivray returns us to the transformative effect of Antipodean encounter on one particular personality, though it analyses that effect chiefly in terms of career rather than of ideas. MacGillivray's excursions in Australia and Melanesia in the 1840s demonstrate, again, how significant the journey to other worlds was to developing new knowledge but also how fragile it made the possibility of inhabiting the scientific life. Alison Bashford's investigation into the work of interwar German geographer, Karl Haushofer, reveals how the Antipodes wrought some unexpected effects on the thinking of one of the key analysts of *lebensraum*. Haushofer's Antipodean object was what we might today call the Asia-Pacific, encompassing the Pacific Islands, Australasia and eastern Asia. In this field, Haushofer's geopolitics came to advocate, somewhat ironically, a version of anti-racism against some Australasian nations as well as a limited kind of right to self-determination in the region (so long as this focused on Japan). For both MacGillivray and Haushofer, the encounter with the Antipodes made them very different scientists than they would otherwise have been.

The section on Befriending is, as already noted, more complicated than we first expected. The chapters by Gardner, Fitzpatrick, and Herle all emphasise warm—if not always mutually transparent or equal—personal connections in their stories of Atlantic encounters with the Antipodes. Unlike the others, this section has a tighter focus on place, period, and subject. All the chapters focus on the Atlantic World in Melanesia specifically; they centre on the latter few decades of the nineteenth century and the *fin-de-siècle*; and they deal with anthropologists or at least ethnographic practice to some degree. Each chapter also throws up one clearly unusual if not paradoxical outcome from encounter. Helen Gardner's chapter on the friendships between the missionary-anthropologist Robert Codrington and the churchmen George Sarawia and Edward Wogale uncovers at least one significant moment of “defiance,” to

use Gardner's term, to the "increasing racialism of nineteenth-century Atlantic science." It also argues thoughtfully about those times when Antipodean institutions such as the Mota *tamate* society find more compatibilities than incommensurabilities with Atlantic structures such as modern Christianity. Sheila Fitzpatrick's chapter on the enigmatic celebrity Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay discusses the several guises of its character, including the imperial traveler and the socialist anthropologist. But it also shows how Maclay eventually became a determined anti-colonialist, a position provoked, unlike his other guises, by his engagement with his Papuan "familials." Anita Herle's chapter is both broad-ranging, surveying the role of Oceania in the development of British social anthropology, and closely detailed, following the fieldwork experiences of Cambridge anthropologist John Layard. Throughout, Herle underscores how "Pacific peoples [were] key interlocutors in the co-production of a specialist branch of knowledge."

The final section on Resisting is, as might be imagined, one of the more challenging parts of the volume—highlighting some of the harshest experiences suffered in the Antipodes from Atlantic interaction and offering some of the toughest critiques on the existing scholarship. Michael McDonnell's chapter is the most historiographical and the most speculative. He poses the question of whether scholars now can "write trans-oceanic histories with indigenous peoples *as our main subjects?*"—not just as supporting actors or even as whistle-blowing counterpoints, but as the pivot around which other questions regarding empire, contact and knowledge might turn. Though comparative indigenous history poses some problems of its own, McDonnell argues that the pay-off might well be a deeper understanding of the indigenous role in the shaping of modernity itself, as well as the forging of a new methodology to expose this process. Ann Curthoys, in a way, has already begun the task, though she wonders more about what a genuine *coming together* of indigenous and imperial histories might look like: her chapter outlines the beginning of a project to combine a history of the granting of responsible government in the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century with a comparative analysis of the concurrent Aboriginal dispossession and fight-back. Katerina Teaiwa, too, has started work on such ideas, both engaging in the kind of widely dispersed comparative indigenous analysis that McDonnell advocates and combining it, like Curthoys, with an equally trenchant account of how various "outsider" institutions have related to indigenous people. Teaiwa's focus is on the contemporary, looking at the ways in which the European Union and other international bodies have tried to think about cultural heritage in "developing" regions and the ways

in which indigenous people have connected with each other, across oceans and continents, to form unlikely but fruitful responses.

Though hardly uniform in approach, the chapters herein have together helped bring out certain fresh emphases in the history of Atlantic-Antipodean exchange—most of all, the critical roles of each side in producing newness, but also the significance of distances and aqueous geography in shaping this moment of modernity. Both as reminders of the depth of individual connections and as prompts to keep experimenting with our vision of the subject, they point to a range of possibilities for further oceanic and colonial studies.

Notes

¹ The extended collective discussion was the Sydney Sawyer Seminar referred to in the Acknowledgments pages of this volume, held at the University of Sydney in 2009-2010. For the “new thalassology,” see Edward Peters, “Quid nobis cum pelago? The New Thalassology and the Economic History of Europe,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34 (2003); P. Horden and N. Purcell, “The Mediterranean and ‘The New Thalassology,’” *American Historical Review* 111/3 (2006); Markus P. M. Vink, “Indian Ocean Studies and the ‘New Thalassology,’” *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007).

² On defining the Atlantic World, see for examples, Bernard Bailyn, “The Idea of Atlantic History,” *Itinerario* 20/1 (1996); David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in D. Armitage and M. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jorge Canizares-Esguerra “Some Caveats about the ‘Atlantic’ Paradigm,” *History Compass* 1 (2003); Michael McDonnell, “Paths Not Yet Taken, Voices Not Yet Heard: Rethinking Atlantic History,” in Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, eds., *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2005); Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *American Historical Review* 111/3 (2006); Paul Cohen, “Was There an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept,” *History of European Ideas* 34/4 (2008). On defining the Pacific, see for examples, Epeli Hau’ofa “Our Sea of Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 6/1 (1994); Greg Fry, “Framing the Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 9/2 (1997); Arif Dirlik, ed., *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Robert Borofsky, ed., *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000); D. Munro & B. Lal, eds., *Texts and Contexts: Reflections in Pacific Islands Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005); Matt Matsuda, “The Pacific,” *American Historical Review* 111/3 (2006); Margaret Jolly, “Imagining Oceania: Indigenous and Foreign Representations of a Sea of Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 19/2 (2007).

³ Margaret Jolly, "The South in *Southern Theory*: Antipodean Reflections on the Pacific," *Australian Humanities Review* 44 (2008), <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-March-2008/jolly.html> (accessed 1 Jan. 2012). This article is in part a review of another topical work for this subject, Raewyn Connell's *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2007).

⁴ See Damon Salesa's pertinent comments about the African angle in Atlantic scholarship, below in the Afterword. A few contributors mention African slavery in this volume; more assume its foundation for the position held by Euro-America during the period studied here.

⁵ See Miles Ogborn, "Atlantic Geographies," *Social and Cultural Geography* 6/3 (2005): 379; also see Margaret Jolly's chapter below.

⁶ For a wry examination of the scholarly penchant for the term "encounters," see Philip D. Morgan, "Encounters between British and 'indigenous' peoples, 1500-1800," in R. Halpern and M. Daunton, eds., *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 42-78.

⁷ See Matt Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Vanessa Smith, *Intimate Strangers: Friendship, Exchange and Pacific Encounter* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Alecia Simmonds, "Imperial Intimacies: love, friendship and governance in British Oceania", University of Sydney PhD thesis, 2012.

PART I:

VOYAGING

CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN OF THE EAST, WOMEN OF THE WEST: REGION AND RACE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY ON COOK'S VOYAGES

MARGARET JOLLY

An Oceanic Turn? Atlantic and Pacific Crossings

This volume constructs a connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the world's two largest oceans. It might be read as part of the recent "oceanic turn" in history. Although there is much to celebrate about the distinctive fluidity of a history abroad on oceans rather than landlocked by continental perspectives, which have arguably dominated Euro-American history to date, we need to be conscious of why and how we conceptualise this connection, these crossings between two oceans.¹ I will return to this problem but first consider the prior question of how we conceive of a region, especially one framed by an ocean.

The regions of our world have been variously named, mapped and envisaged. As many scholars have demonstrated, maps chart historically-changing relations of knowledge and power, and predicate a point of view from the location of a privileged observer.² So large tracts of Asia that had previously been designated "Tartary" were, during the course of the nineteenth century, re-named as Near, Middle and Far East, calculated in terms of relative proximity from the locus of Europe, although the calculus of remoteness shifted over time.³ Similarly, the twentieth-century moniker of the "West" invests a cardinal direction with an ideological and geopolitical value, while the contemporary language of global "North" and "South" denotes regions as richer/more developed versus poorer/less developed and problematically associates geopolitical conceptions with cardinal directions and quotidian notions of "up" and "down."⁴

The historical geographer Miles Ogborn has written about both the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans in a way that reveals the changing relations of knowledge and power exercised in and over these regions.⁵ For him, Atlantic geographies exceed local or national perspectives and are attentive to the longer term of “dynamic circumnavigatory flows,” the movements of peoples, ideas and materials, *and* the movement of winds and ocean currents in both “violent and productive ways.” The Atlantic is both a place and a time—in European periodisation the moment of early modernity. “It was made through the unequal labour, knowledge and investment of the peoples living around its rim and moving across its depths and shallows from the late fifteenth century onwards.”⁶ It was not just a Euro-American place but also one that engaged African men and women as “active contributors to the new hybrid intercultures of the oceanic zone.”⁷ Both Europeans and Africans criss-crossed the ocean many times and, “threw a cat’s cradle of voyages across the waves and swells,” and “stitched the margins of the Atlantic world together.”⁸

Ogborn differentiates three epistemologies for Atlantic geographies: “the survey, the network and the trace.” The survey entails comparisons between places and times within a conceived unity, but usually maps territories or nations bordering the ocean rather than charting the ocean itself. The network rather focuses on the changing web of social and material connections; in lieu of a surveyor’s map it graphs a topology of lines and points. The trace is a more particularist account, for example of individual journeys that reveal how “intimate and large-scale histories and geographies intersect in wandering paths and personal transformation.”⁹ He considers all three have their flaws and they are not mutually incompatible.

David Armitage also offers a tripartite division, between what he calls the three concepts of *Circum-Atlantic* history (a transnational history), *Trans-Atlantic* history (an international history) and, after Thomas Jefferson, *Cis-Atlantic* history (national or regional history in an Atlantic context).¹⁰ Armitage had earlier proclaimed: “We are all Atlanticists now!”¹¹ This rousing proclamation has been both celebrated and critiqued.¹² There is a comparable passion in celebration and critique in Pacific Studies, but the echoing cry would not be the spitting sibilants of “We are all Pacificists now!” but, rather, “We are all Oceanists now!”, especially in the wake of the visionary writing of Tongan scholar Epeli Hau’ofa, whose passing we recently mourned.¹³

What's in a Name? Region and Race

People made a home in the world of Oceania and navigated across its waters for millennia prior to European “discoveries” from the fifteenth century: ancestors of indigenous Australians from c. 50,000 BP, of the Papuan speakers of Papua New Guinea, Bougainville and the Solomons from c. 40,000–50,000 BP and of Austronesian speakers who predominate in the insular Pacific from c. 3,000 BP.¹⁴ Speakers of all these languages of the Pacific had a variety of names for the ocean they inhabited, evoking both its material liquidity and the space of passage.

The name Pacific is rather a foreign label, first conferred by Magellan who, on his long voyage of 1519–21, found it relatively tranquil (likely compared to the stormy Atlantic he had just crossed). The ocean with its many islands—and, for centuries in European visions, an imagined antipodean continent *Terra Australis Incognita* (from the sixteenth century)—was known in European languages variously as *Magellanica*, *Mar del Sur*, the South Seas, Oceanica and Oceania.¹⁵ As the writings of both Bronwen Douglas and Serge Tcherkézoff demonstrate, albeit in different ways, the preferred labels differed between European languages, and the boundaries of all such regional labels were historically fluid.¹⁶ “Oceania” thus earlier included not only all the islands of the Pacific, from what we now call Rapanui to Papua New Guinea, but also insular Southeast Asia, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and, in some formulations, even Madagascar.¹⁷

The labels “Melanesia” and “Polynesia” were applied by Dumont d’Urville in 1832, to distinguish not just regions but “two distinct races” on the basis of “skin colour, physical appearance, language, political institutions, religion, and reception of Europeans.”¹⁸ His distinction was patently hierarchical: “black” Melanesians were adjudged inferior to “copper-coloured” Polynesians but superior to those “primitives” closer to the state of nature—Australians and Tasmanians. His distinctions linked region and race while Charles V. Monin’s map, drawn after d’Urville, condensed them, overlaying divisions earlier drawn by geographers with d’Urville’s divisions of “races of men.”¹⁹ Epeli Hau’ofa reclaimed “Oceania” in an anti-racist project that rejected such foreign partitions and deployed the ocean as material and metaphor, connecting all Pacific peoples in both region and rim, in both islands and distant diasporic locations.²⁰

As Douglas has persuasively argued, “race” is a slippery and contested word, especially in the late eighteenth century.²¹ She suggests that its meaning hardened from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries from a

more labile concept that loosely denoted “nation” or “type” to one which denoted the ontological reality of biologically determined hereditary groupings. She glosses this shift as one “from climate to crania.”²² If race was a slippery and contested word, so too was its conjugation with the concept of region. In some earlier formulations, location, environment and climate were seen to have a strong influence on the character of “races” while in later formulations, biological racial essences were seen to prevail regardless of location.

Women of the east, Women of the west

In this chapter, I explore how, before the naming of d’Urville’s “two distinct races,” Melanesians and Polynesians, some European voyagers perceived profound differences between peoples and places of the Pacific. Texts and images from Cook’s three voyages, and especially the second voyage, suggest differences were made not just on the criteria privileged by d’Urville (“skin colour, appearance, language, politics, religion and the reception of Europeans”) but, crucially, on the basis of gender. From the late eighteenth century, before “race” was reconceived as a natural biological difference, the difference between women and men was already being seen as a natural universal, grounded in sexual and reproductive biology.²³ In the Pacific, this difference was further explored and elaborated by European navigators and scientists. There was a strong contrast made between “the women of the east” and the “women of the west”—that is, between the eastern and the western islands of the Pacific—in terms of women’s physical beauty, the character of their labour, their position vis-à-vis men and, crucially, their sexual receptivity to European men.²⁴ This contrast was *always* articulated with a comparison to European women, whom I might dub, anachronistically, as “women of the West.” Thus the contrastive figures of exotic women in distant Pacific islands were always triangulated with a third—the figure of European women—and, on Cook’s voyages, often English women, “Britannia’s daughters,” the progeny and producers of the “Island Race” of home.²⁵

In navigating this argument, I am conscious of three major reefs, which I try to avoid: the perils of presentism and teleology, an anachronistic use of national rather than archipelagic identities, and the challenge of reconstructing indigenous experiences and realities—of recovering “double vision” through the monocular lens of a plethora of texts and images authored by Europeans.

First, although inspired by Greg Denning's vision of the relation of past and present as like the double helix of our DNA,²⁶ dialogically connected and inexorably intertwined, I try to avoid presentism or a teleological reading of sources, thereby construing the experiences of late-eighteenth-century voyages in terms of what came later. I am arguing that gender is crucial in delineating a difference between Pacific peoples and places on the Cook voyages, not that this is the *same* difference or merely anticipates what was later named as Melanesia/Polynesia.²⁷

Second, the differences detected by Europeans were often perceived *within* island archipelagos as well as *between* them. Several Pacific archipelagos are still known by names conferred by Cook, but those names now signal a novel unity developed in the colonial and postcolonial formation of nation states and territories: Vanuatu (the indigenous name adopted at independence in 1980, previously Cook's New Hebrides), New Caledonia (so named by Cook), Hawai'i (named the Sandwich Islands by Cook), French Polynesia (O-Taheitee and Society Islands, per Cook,) and Aotearoa New Zealand (a conjunction of an indigenous name and Cook's New Zealand, an Anglicisation of the Dutch Nova Zeelandia). Distinctions were often made *within* such island groups, for example between Malakula²⁸ and Tanna in the archipelago Cook called the New Hebrides.

Finally, and most consequentially, there is the problem of the partiality of our sources—partiality in both the sense of incompleteness and of interestedness. It may seem odd to emphasise partiality, given the simultaneous abundance. There are copious primary sources: many voyage texts authored by Cook, several officers and scientists like Johann Reinhold Forster and his son George;²⁹ a vast array of images, ranging from *in situ* drawings through published engravings, watercolours and oil paintings by several voyage artists—Sydney Parkinson, William Hodges and John Webber—and a huge number of Pacific objects collected by Cook and others, most of which are now held in diverse European museums.³⁰ Secondary sources abound and are growing; more than thirty new Cook books have appeared in the last thirty years.³¹ The sheer plenty of this material, primarily of foreign authorship, entails certain risks—that instead of true “double vision,” that stereoscopic depth of perspective generated by looking from both sides of such cross-cultural encounters, we rather end up with that other sense of the term: blurred, disturbed and distorted vision.³²

Yet it has been argued not only that we can read such European texts and images “against the grain” but also that indigenous agency can be discerned as “counter-signs” in such sources, albeit camouflaged within Eurocentric views and requiring rigorous decoding.³³ Moreover, Pacific

objects now in foreign museums can reveal as much about the indigenous contexts of and motivations for exchange as they do about the passions and constraints on European collecting of such “artificial curiosities.”³⁴ The dominance of weapons of war from the islands of the western Pacific—from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and New Caledonia—as against the more diverse arrays from Tahiti, Hawai‘i and Tonga (including many objects created and used by women such as *tapa* and pandanus baskets and textiles from the latter islands) suggests not just that European representations of the western islands were dominated by views of bellicose men who opposed the strangers with indigenous weapons³⁵ but, too, that women in the western Pacific, such as Malakula and Tanna were far less engaged in exchanges with Europeans than were women in the east.³⁶ Moreover, the perceptions and insights of generations of Pacific peoples remembered in oral traditions, inscribed in texts by missionaries and ethnographers, and authored as indigenous histories and analyses, *can* be deployed, not to suggest eternal unchanging cultural scripts but, rather, to ensure that our “double vision” is not so much blurred as more deeply stereoscopic.³⁷

In dealing with gender and sexuality on Cook's voyages, we are dealing with both the embodied experiences of European and Pacific historical agents—“real” men, women, and transgendered people—and with gender as a labile, fertile and changing code: one that, as Strathern has argued for the world of “Melanesia,”³⁸ contextually designates relations, processes and events rather than merely marking the natural essences of sexed bodies. In this Enlightenment period when “nature,” and especially reproductive difference, was being privileged as *the* universal difference between men and women,³⁹ gender as a code was also being deployed by Europeans in increasingly complex ways to mark not just differences of sex but also of race and class. In contrast to Edward Said's view, articulated in *Orientalism* (1978), that colonised peoples such as those in the Middle East were feminised,⁴⁰ in the Pacific we rather witness that while both men and women of the eastern islands, and especially those of noble rank were frequently feminised (and seen as indolent, voluptuous, vulnerable and accommodating), peoples of the western islands (women and men) were rather masculinised (and seen as hard-working, ascetic, muscular and resistant). Complex gender codes interacted with European constructs of exotic sexuality emergent from voyage encounters, particularly apropos the sexual excess and access imputed to the eastern islands of Tahiti and Hawai‘i. In the visions of Pacific peoples, gender and sexuality were no less complex and intimately entangled constructions.⁴¹

“European Vision”: From Preconception and Projection to Embodied Experience

Bernard Smith’s magisterial corpus, from *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960) to *Imagining the Pacific* (1992), yields brilliant insights into how the aesthetics of drawing, engraving and painting were inseparable from the colonial relations and discourses of the eighteenth-century Pacific.⁴² Smith also establishes how crucial the “discoveries” of Pacific voyaging were in the genesis of scientific empiricism and evolutionary theory in Europe. Moreover, he underscores how central the knowledge and the embodied experience of Pacific peoples were in the metropolitan cultural contests about the state of “nature” and in constituting the tension between the tropes of noble and ignoble savages. As Smith protests in the foreword to the second edition of *European Vision* (1985), his focus is not so much on how European preconceptions, often developed in the Atlantic world, were projected onto the Pacific but rather on how the embodied experience of the Pacific (in which he included Australia) *changed* European visions⁴³ and had profound effects back “home.” Pacific voyaging from the late eighteenth century onwards brought many revolutionary ideas back to Europe, as well as “natural” and “artificial curiosities” and the novel fashion of tattooing.

Perceptions of Pacific women and their relations with men were central to debates that linked constructs of exotic others with differences between contemporary Europeans, all across the Atlantic world, and postulations about past societies, especially ancient Greece and Rome. The Pacific, like the Atlantic, was not just a place but was plotted in time. The figure of woman became a crucial sign in the emergent but still unstable theory of progress from savagery to civilisation, just as she was a sign of the dangers of opulence and overheated commerce in Europe itself. Indeed, as Harriet Guest has argued, on the basis of Cook voyage texts, “woman” was perceived not just as a sign of progress but as its catalyst.⁴⁴ The ambiguous potency of the figure of woman is best revealed if we consider not only Tahitian women but also women from other parts of the Pacific with whom they were regularly compared and contrasted. We are dealing with both the singular figure of “woman” as a universal and, pluralised, particular figures of “women.”

Divergent figures of women were a critical part of an emergent hierarchy, contrasting the light-skinned, soft-haired peoples of the eastern islands and the dark-skinned, frizzy-haired people of the western islands. The eroticisation of women’s bodies was a crucial aspect of this: they were assessed in terms of their sexual allure for European men. Captain Cook

and some (but not all) of the gentlemen officers and scientists on board refrained from sexual relations with Pacific women. Cook castigated and tried episodically to prevent his crews from giving way to their "brutal appetites" and thereby spreading deadly venereal diseases. But the erotic appeal and the sexual availability of women were nevertheless critical to the categories formulated by the scientists.

We might also consider the way in which these men related the erotic appeal of women's bodies to the work women did. In many of the eastern islands high-ranking women in particular were depicted as ample and fleshy both because of the expansiveness of their diet and the languidness of their pursuits. In such places, the main work of high-ranking women was the work of making *tapa*—a cloth beaten from bark, most usually from the inner skin of the paper mulberry. The beating, formation and decoration of *tapa* cloth was perceived by European observers not as hard manual labour but as a refined art. The wielding of the mallet was no doubt more strenuous than the insinuation of the needle in embroidery and tapestry by English ladies, but it was classed similarly as a refined feminine art that women did together. By contrast, women in Vanuatu, New Caledonia and New Zealand were perceived as spare, with "masculine" musculature and sometimes cast as haggard, crippled and deformed because of their hard work: cultivating taro and yams or collecting fern roots, fetching water and wood, with babies on their backs or in their bellies. Their labour was not aestheticised but bestialised; they were described as "pack horses" or "beasts of burden."

Finally, women in the eastern and the western islands were contrasted in terms of their empowerment vis-à-vis men. The high-ranking women of Hawai'i, Tahiti, and Tonga were seen as formidable ladies in their own right, sometimes of higher rank than their husbands or brothers, and able to exercise their own rights in exchanges with Europeans—be they material or corporeal. Women in the western islands, by contrast, were seen as subjugated by their menfolk—not only drudges in the fields, but subject to cruel physical treatment and oppressive male domination. This construction of women's power rebounded on the European perception of the agency of the women in sexual relations with European men. At one extreme, women were seen as licentious and lascivious, even to the point of forcing their sexual attentions upon the sailors. At the other extreme, women were seen to have little or no agency and, regardless of whether they were or were not having sexual liaisons with foreigners, were seen as the "property" of their fathers or other male kin. This elides elements of coercion or forcible persuasion in the first scenario and of women's will and efficacy in the second.⁴⁵ In such voyage texts, the "status of woman"

as subject or object, as agent or victim in relation to men thus became a crucial index of the passage from savagery or civilisation. This was a commonplace in the writings of both the French and the Scottish Enlightenment and the philosophy of John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft.⁴⁶

In terms of the labels that emerged in the nineteenth century, this might be seen to correspond roughly to the partitioning of “Polynesia” from “Melanesia”.⁴⁷ In the late-eighteenth century, though, the details of distinctions made by voyagers suggest greater fluidity and flexibility. The Māori women of New Zealand float between these two classes. Although classified “racially” with those of the eastern islands, Māori were seen by Johann Reinhold Forster to be “slipping down” and Māori women were frequently represented in terms akin to those of the western islands. Their appearance is denigrated, their work perceived as arduous drudgery; they are seen as oppressed by men. Their oppression is patent in their sexual availability to Europeans, whereby they are seen as the “property” of their menfolk. They are, to use Johann Forster’s inimitable phrase, “ready victims.”

In what follows, I explore these contrasting figures of Pacific women in the writing of Johann Reinhold Forster and his son George. But I also argue that a focus only on such generalising contrasts fails to capture not just the fluidity and complexity of such adjudications but also the more uncertain character of embodied experience and, integral to that experience, the agency of indigenous people—women and men. A rigorous reading of Cook voyage sources must engage, as many have done,⁴⁸ a critical comparison of many competing accounts—an awareness of the chasm between generalising pronouncements and the particularities of local, often evanescent experiences, and a passion not just for the visual traces of European maps, sketches, engravings and paintings (and notably those of Tupaia) but also for indigenous creations collected as so many “artificial curiosities.”

I will concentrate my focus on the second voyage and on the differences between the accounts of Johann Reinhold Forster⁴⁹ and those of his son George. Many of Forster senior’s grandiloquent generalisations in his *Observations* are at odds not just with daily events depicted in other sources but even with those reported by Forster junior in his *A Voyage Round the World*.⁵⁰ Johann had been precluded from publishing an official narrative by the British Admiralty. This ban did not extend to George, whose *Voyage* was published six weeks before the official account came out under Cook’s name. Its authorship has been long contested. It is based on Johann’s journal and includes opinions therein different from Johann’s